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CRUMPLED LEAVES

VERSE

BY

Christine Hamilton Watson

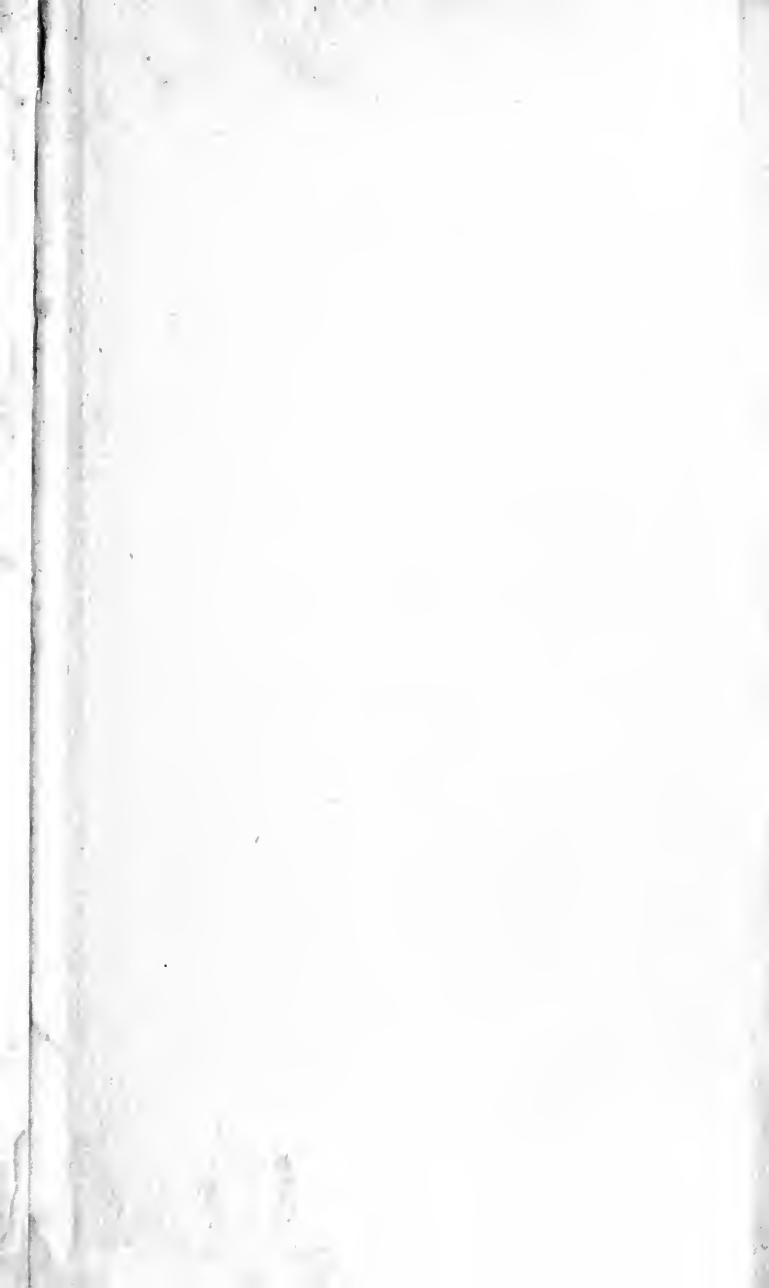


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CRUMPLED LEAVES



Crumpled Leaves

Verse

By

CHRISTINE HAMILTON WATSON

NEW YORK
JAMES T. WHITE & CO.

1921

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

to

MINERVA GILLETTE STACY WILKIN

*As blossoms spring to brighten, dot and strew
Our daily path, so friendship has bestowed
Its tender cheer and balm upon the road,
For friendship is the flower's heart and there.
We love these blossoms of the way! Those who
Love us—to whom a wealth of joy is owed—
With witchery release our dreary load
And give an inspiration, dear, like you.*

*We roam among the friendship-blossoms fine
In deep delight: held by their fragrancy
We worship worth as at a sacred shrine,
And touch some velvet beauty reverently.
From you, dear friend, round me, each time I passed,
A rare, pervading perfume seemed to last.*

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CRUMPLED LEAVES



PROEM

The crumpled leaves of last year's summer day
Are wind-swept now and torn by careless feet;
Like battered old beliefs that strew the way,
Their worthlessness is scorned in wise conceit:
Yet once, consider, once they were alive!
And for a season, joyous to adorn,—
Contented idly to adorn, nor strive
For greatness—through their life new joy was
born.

And so a whispering grace lives in my heart
Through their achievement. Tho their year has
fled

Its never ending day remains apart,
And crumpled leaves, wind-blown afar and dead,
May still, upon life's keyboard rustling, play
A soothingly detached and minor lay!

CRUMPLED LEAVES

EVENING RAHPSODY

The day is nearing night,
And I, alone,
Lured by the tender evening light—
Within my garden watch its flight.
The twilight's calm and power atone
For hours of dazing gladness:
Day's heartache, day's brief madness,
Are gone and thoughts grow firefly-white.

The sod beneath my feet
Is soft as evening's hush
And dew's caress:
Gleaming flower petals crush
Their scented sweet—
Their honeyed hearts—and press
Each other and the drooping boughs;
While pulsing summer air endows
The senses with delight replete
To still the futile rush,—
For here I learn to fling aside
And calm desire unsatisfied.

The pompous bumble-bee
Drifts lazily
From flower to flower, in each to dip,
For one more nectar sip
Before his day is done.
Moth wings, with fleeting camaraderie
And fairy grace, alight on me,
And I, dream-startled at his fun,
Mistake the whirring humming-bird,
Which dartles by,
For vagrant sprite, unduly shy—
As tho his heart were stirred
With sly conspiracy!
Ah, elfin forms I think I see
From hidden leaves uncurled.
Is this a real, or a wonder world?

The shadows fall.
Earth's longings pall,
And to my spirit
Gently sounds a distant call—
Hark! Hear it!
With city's hum and hurry far away,
The murmurings of twilight come to stay;
Silences are filled with melody,
Which nature turns to dulcet symphony
And vibrates secrets that compel
A recognition of the rune;

Under the woven spell
My ears discern the tune.
Even the nighthawk's blatant call
Blends wierdly, whimsey notes that fall
With whirr of swooping wings—
And out of discord brings
A lasting harmony.

Delphineum's cerulean blue
Is changing to a softer hue,
For, while I gaze,
The blossom tints revoke—
They seem to turn to smoke,
And mingle with the haze
To offer Nature-incense once anew.

The dusk now deeper, still descends
And lends
Mysterious subilties to fill the soul,
And take its toll
Of quickened adoration!
Lost in contemplation
Of the tenuous film of night,
Things tangible are taking flight,
And one by one the stars and moon progress
To lean their pure white loveliness
Upon my dazzled sight,—
To draw me high and higher

Into their realm of silver fire.
The earth recedes,
And fleeting vision leads
To new-born inner light.

God! God is the vital heart!
But I, too, am a part.
I feel a pounding flood
Of passion sweeping through my blood
To tell the marvel of it all—
To speak—but I am dumb!
Thrilled by the highest call
Of Heaven's resounding roll,
Unquestioning, I come
And answer, soul to soul.

FROST-FOLIAGE

The colors in the autumn seem
To flare and fill my mind
With all the riot of a dream,—
With conflict intertwined.

Emotions leap to answer flame
In passion unfortold,
Which turn the rue and trifling blame
To leaf forgotten mold.

A mass of yellow, wild delight,
Is spread before my eyes
Like tawny lions when in might
Their latent powers arise.

Here is the woodbine's brilliant flood
Of crimson strewn around
As though, in wantonness, heart's blood
Were poured upon the ground.

And there pure white anemones
Nod blithe and winsome faces,
Creating art by which one sees
Youthful, appealing graces.

Beside them flaunts vermillion red
Blaze-flaming with desire:—
Not caring what is known or spread,
It builds a funeral pyre.

The tinge of quiet purple leaf
Shames mad and garish sights,
And paints great pictures, clear though brief,
Which wisdom's lore unites.

But gold, gold shines above the rest,
Reflecting passing schemes:
The dying autumn day is dressed
In living, golden dreams.

And all this brilliant, dull, embossed,
Sad-sombre, glorious whole,
Is like our lives:—a touch of frost
And gold lights up the soul!

SAILING

A fleet of sailboats, we—
Blown, chartless, over life's rough sea;
And each must sail alone—
Adventure on from zone to zone
Sails trimmed or free.

The sea is bright or gray;
It may be calm; it may be gay
With gold on every wave:
But there are storms and night to brave
That seek their prey!

A deadly calm is worst!
One is not always haply versed
In saving energy
Against the fell monotony
That sleeps, accursed.

When we are tossed by waves
The tossing is the part that saves;
We take the spray arace,
Bow-forward, fully in the face,
Tho Neptune raves.

But if the winds are strong
Unseemly hurtling us along,
A battle is the thing—
The note of courage spiriting
Our chanty song.

When tempest, though we flee,
Shall hurl us shoreward ruthlessly,
Eternity looms bright
To guide us with its harbor light
Safe home from sea!

CHEER

Upon this dismal, murky day,
I heard the note of a chickadee
Blithely sound this roundelay—
“The sun is shining for me—me—me!”

And as I caught the cheering sound,
My heart rose over the chilling mist
To match the high light it had found.
The sun is shining; I, too, insist!

CONTENT

Contentment rarely comes without the pang
Of birth to life:
The wisdom of experience must hang
On calm and strife.

Stern pain as well as cherished pleasure's glow
Is Heaven sent,—
For Joy and Grief must join to make us know
Their child, Content.

RETROVERSION

The ocean beats in thunderous waves
 Upon the shore,
And so my heart, tumultuous, beats,
 As at your door.

The surf-wave, spent, recedes along
 The beach-wide shelf,
And I, too, baffled, shrink away
 Within myself!

WILD-WIND

Wild-wind, inhuman and unkind!
It writhes and moans, is never still
And with a gust, in wrath designed,
Attempts, mob-like, to have its will.

Roaring, swirling in reckless might,
It flings defiance to mankind;
It makes me long to turn in flight,—
This unrelenting blasting wind.

Untamed, aggressive, fierce and coarse,
It rudely hisses in my ears;
It bends my faith with brutal force
And breaks its strength against my fears.

I brave the wild tempestuous storm,
But find my courage torn to bits;
I fight the unrestrained vague form,
Yet will not coward-like cry quits.

Why such remorseless ways, O wind!
Is it the world's returned unrest,
Which forces calm to seethe and find
Such brutal strength, such wanton zest?

Or does the surging, restless wind
War with the "still small voice" and prove
The apotheosis of the mind—
The Godlike strength of truth and love?

Though sufferings and storms infuse
Their searching questions into me,
Though fearful winds I would not choose,
They help—not harm—humanity.

Oh life, so tossed and tempest-blind,
So at the mercy of storm's dole,
Your lessons come and thus I find
A raging gale may brace the soul.

WHITHER?

Whither away
Fleet bird, so gay?
You flit across the evening sky—
Where and why?

Soft wind that blows,
You come, who knows
Whence! And what message do you send
To earth's far end?

Why are you here,
O night moth near—
Are you a spirit born anew?
I wonder who!

Oh, evening star
You circle far!
And like my soul—beyond the hither
I question—Whither?

IMPEDIMENTS

Our yielding lives drift hampered
By trivial things that we must do!

God at our feet—

Yet we must eat!

And we are, oh, so pampered
That we grow hardened—I and you.

Our aims are vain or groundless
For we are held by things we see.

Our bodies—Oh

Let them go!

Can we not find the boundless,
Since now it is eternity?

AGE-OLD DOORWAYS

From out of Life's wide window,
In Age's little house,
I saw a pathway winding
To a tempting gay carouse.

There was a door wide open,
To prove that I could go;
But when I turned my footsteps
I saw dead ashes blow!

Alas, that open doorway
Bewildering with its view!
To feel the lure beyond it—
And not, and *not* pass through!

Yet I would rather see it,
And yield no step to win,
Than never know the brilliance
From a shuttered black within.

THE COMMON QUEST

I hunted for my Happiness—
Hunted untiring, here and there!
I ran along far roadways where
I thought I saw her velvet dress
Or caught the tinge of love kissed hair.

I searched on day's high mountain plot,
Through dusky star-lit deep of night;
I even sought where fancy-flight
Sees phantom threads of hope unknot
And each retreat I probed outright.

With haste I took life's proffered lure
And went to every splendid fete;
In festal garments, far and late
I hunted, hunted to secure
The gift her powers irradiate.

And sometimes when I turned my eyes
I seemed to see her raptured face,
And other times in passioned place
I felt with clinging swift surprise
Her wonder webs of filmy lace.

But when she wore her finest gown,
The gown of flowing flaming white
Made pure with iridescent light,

She fled from me, o'er heath and down
And left me craving nearer sight.

At last with baffled hope and torn
By jagged pain, I gave the cry—
“Now home, the search to crucify!”
And there within that slighted bourne
My highest Happiness stood by.

DREAM-DAYS

Some days we see beyond the reach of wind!
Tho born within the body's prison case,
Or wrapped in fogs of circumstance, the mind
Can rise and, winging, soar afar in space.

Perchance the eyes find but a sorry dream
And, like the swooping nighthawk after food,
The spirits sink, then catch the proffered gleam
Of hope and rise again in quest of good.

Sometimes the days are happiest when so
The spirit-eyes are freed,—when will-o'-the-wisp
From shadowed space upflares and, awed, we
 know
The harmonies that phantom tongues can lisp.

SQUAW WINTER

When I looked up, the other day,
I saw the sky all darkly gray,
Except what seemed to be a stage.
What could its brilliant light presage?
I questioned what it was about,
But answers, each, were put to rout,
Until the secret's edge was limned,
Precisely as the light was dimmed!

Then suddenly I saw, as flirts,
A million billowy ballet skirts;—
Tier on tier, tiptoe, hand in hand,
Swayed, twisted, turned a cloudlet band.
The prima donna led the rest.
Most daintily with swansdown dressed,
And then the others scudded out
Trained ready for the dance, no doubt.

With that the grayish curtain fell,
And in the air, from hill to dell,
Some fluffy flakes were shaken down,
From each soft white and cloudy gown.
At last the secret, then, was out—
First snow was scattered all about!
It was Squaw Winter's pretty play,
Preceding Indian Summer's day.

MY NAMESAKE

Dear little girl, with the bronzy curl,
I am thinking of you, to-day—
Your eyes nut-brown and the fluttering down
Of your soft and tender way.

You darling thing, I long to sing,
Because you are blithe and gay,
And you—so sweet, with tripping feet,
Can lead my world this day.

I feel you hear and enfold you, dear,
In my longing, wistful arms.
And when you come so frolicsome,
You vanquish life's alarms.

You own my heart—not just a part,
And you love me, I know.
To me there's bliss in your sweet kiss
That makes my heart's blood flow.

"BUNNY BOY"

Dear tiny boy with eyes of blue
And mischievous, alluring smile,
I long to watch you each day through
To see the winsome things you do,
And let your artful ways beguile.

I love your darling little self;
Your constant pitter-pat of feet
As you pursue your chosen pelf:
You know your power, you roguish elf,
With glances charmingly discreet!

Your chatter has the dearest sound;
To be grown up you bravely try.
You're such a treasure, I have found
That no one counts with you around,
And cares develop wings and fly.

Although big brothers in their play
Give thumps and bumps, you shed few tears;
And when you blink the signs away,
A hint of manhood you betray,
Though less than two, your earth-lived years.

You seem to know so many things,
I think when you were earthward bound,

Through cloud space where the sky-lark sings,
The Wisdom Angel with his wings
Touched you and made your thought profound.

I've loved you since you were brand new,
And when I have a baby boy—
(My dream eyes can possess one, too!)
I'll have him fashioned just like you;
Your phantom self of bounding joy.

MYSELF AWAY

Whene'er I say—"I'm not myself to-day,"
I wonder what I mean.
Does some bad fay come stealing me away
And keep itself unseen?

I feel 'tis right that this uncanny sprite,
Which makes my soul depressed,
Should not incite within my true self flight
To cowardly unrest.

So I shall say that I am "out" to-day
When not what I should be;
I hate delay, yet surely 'tis fair play
If not myself, you see.

But why permit that creature to outwit
Or take my form and face?
I'll make it quit! I will not have an "it"—
A usurper in my place!

FOR AN INVALID

Oh I am thankful for a room
With cozy fluffy bed,
Where I can pause awhile and rest
My burdened pain-bent head.

Tho pains may come and joys may flee,
Yet I can always find
This restful little comfort nook
Where I can tuck my mind.

The blessings of the world are big
Tho small they often seem;
And he is blessed who has a bed
Where he may sleep and dream.

And so again I give heart thanks
For common boons of man,
Tho idly I must watch poor Life
Drag Pain's dull caravan!

RESTRAINT

I long to roam the wide earth unrestrained,
To see my yearning wishes all attained,
To wander through the shady forest glen,
And feel the freedom of the world again,—

But I can knit!

Long row on row, to lull the wants of me
And weave the liberty of life. I'm free—

For I can knit!

I long to gain a knowledge of the earth,
Of men, of countries and of every worth.
I cannot loiter where the great and wise
Drop words of wonder and philosophize,—

But I can read!

Books are the panacea for dull days,
Transforming monotones to hymns of praise,

For I can read!

I long to see a wide expanse of sky
With fairy clouds, sun-burnished, floating by;
I long to climb and scale the dizzy height
To feel the wafted measure of their might,—

But I can dream!

I shut my eyes and all the sky possess,
I lose the dross of mundane ugliness,

For I can dream!

I long to carry joy among mankind,
And, finding some one sorrowful of mind,
To give to him a comforting caress,
To place new hopes where battered hopes dis-
tress,

But I can love!

I'll send the waves of thought with vital verve
To stir the veil which hides the soul. I serve,
For I can love!

IRON CROSSES

Great courage and surpassing bravery,
"In this world's battle, win the service cross
And praise of men. But oh, what pangs there be
For those who live to bear the cruel loss!

The conflicts waged within us are so great
We wonder why we care to fight at all.
Sometimes the clinging burdens dominate,
Benumb us, till we care not what befall.

What honor, glory, come through discipline
To waiting ones? They, battling in the soul
Are reaping hidden gain and strive to win—
Ah, through hard iron crosses—to the goal!

“ORA PRO NOBIS”

So vague is time! For what do we await?
The hours, the days, the months, the weary years
Drag by, their nets o'erbrimming with life's
fears.

How full is earth of hopeless souls whom fate
Has flung into the maelstrom whirl of hate,
Of blighting change, of turbid war which leers
Into our faces with its horrid jeers!
Oh, pray for us, that time may extricate.

We pine for vain delights that swiftly flee,—
For fame, success or evanescent might.
Why choose such earthly fleeting majesty?
Time laughs, and takes it from us in a night!
We wait but fortune's deep and moulding line
To mark our souls with an eternal sign.

IN THE BREAKERS

Great billows of despair
Have broken over me.
I have been tossed in air
And flung down by this sea.

The deeps of sordid strife
Have crushed and left a scar :
The undertow of life
Has torn me, drawn me far.

Deep down I was submerged,—
Ay, smothered in the swirl
When the waves fumed and surged
In the mad sweeping whirl.

Alone, alone I found
Not one to see my need.
Helpless, I almost drowned
For just some one to heed.

Oh, marvelous life-line
Flung out to rescue me !
It was some power divine—
Saving from life's dark sea !

MIND UNREST

Chaos! Enigmatic, falling,
Ever sinking in a hopeless plight.
Useless probe and futile calling;
Empty answer—bafflement and night!

Soul of mine, why wonder, wonder—
When you cannot, must not know the whole?
Chaos shall be rent asunder
When the heavens spread their flashing scroll.

INTERVALS

The long dark intervals that teem
Between the times worth while
Are intricate and vague, and seem
Devoid of any helpful gleam
We crave to mark life's dial.

But fleeting moments most divine,
Which no one can prolong,
Disclose the brilliance of soul-shine—
Reveal the heights of God's design,
And fill the heart with song.

The dreary interval outvies
The frowning intervalles
Deep hidden where the mountains rise
To overshadow that which lies
Within the humble swales.

We cannot scale the utmost height
Nor dwell in thought sublime,
But life holds balances, and light
Can touch our spiritual sight
To beautify all time.

EASTER IN A HOSPITAL

Lo, Easter! Early morning darkness clings
And slowly lifts the heavy pall of dread
To lessen, gently, weary sufferings;
The long night filled with pain, with torture fed,
At last is nearly gone; another day
Is creeping through the open window sash
To bring reviving courage with its breath,
 For this is Easter on its way!
And Easter morn forgets the cruel lash,
And Easter hastens healing out of death.

The day assumes a mildly stirring tone
Contrasting with the stifling ethered air
Which penetrates and brings a muffled moan.
Far distant sounds of deep toned bells declare
A pleasing message so serenely clear
That, tho a frightened child in anguish screams,
The dreaded shadows pass and radiance shines!
 For Easter has an atmosphere
That, aching heart and injury, redeems,
That, hope and joy and reverence, combines.

The hesitating step, the breath of flowers
Proclaim a visitor to some closed door
Where silences are ominous of hours
Beating their poignant sword-thrusts to the core.
Through tranquil stillness, sudden clink of dish

Is borne, an anxious whispered call and then,
Although it is the Resurrection Day,

A nurse's rapid rustling swish
Is heard adown the hall and back again,
Mayhap to ease a soul on death's lone way.

Supreme and holy Resurrection Day!
The day victorious Christ fresh comfort brings,
With conquering relief for pain-torn clay,
And thought that lifts one up to highest things.
To-day I see the Lord; the world is fair
And I can never cease through Easter Day
To glorify this new Epiphany.

God's manifested love to wear,
The past sad crown of thorns is put away—
I live again through living Calvary!

Spirit of Easter! Hallowed chimes that fall
With silver-ringing cadence on the air!
Past Golgotha's dark cross and bitter gall,
They waft their sacred praises on, where'er
An awe-filled heart is kneeling low to pray
And chant the antiphon. The skies relume
Christ love, and heaven's advent lingereth,

For this is happy Easter Day!
And Easter joy leaves grieving in the tomb
And Easter giveth life in place of death.

ALONG THE WAY

Along the way we find the rock strewn path,
The hard ascent, the steep declivity ;
But God, above the wounding roadway, hath
Bestowed the tinted clouds, the sun-kissed leaves,
The strong uplifting spell which pure air weaves,
And richest treasure given for us to see—
So, I forget distresses which abound
To look and find God's blessings all around.

CHILD-FAITH

Oh, close and confident I lie
 Against God's heart, upon the grass,
And look up in his face—the sky
 And try to know his thoughts that pass.

But though I cannot fathom far,
 I know he holds me all the while;
And when he signals with a star,
 I see his love,—a twinkling smile!

VOICES

Voices come calling across the plain;
Voice of the wind and voice of the rain,
Eagerly calling to children of men—
“Come, rise above the nothings of earth,
Search out the marvels of highest worth
That cannot be told by tongue or pen.”

Voices come whispering over the leas;
Voices of grasses, the leaves of the trees
Gently intone as they sway to and fro—
“Leave all the vanishing forces awhile,
Let spirit ascend from earth, mile on mile,
And seek for the things that we do not know.”

A voice from the forest vibrates afar;
The voice from the cloud that sings to a star
Carries us upward, higher than thought,
Loosens the chains of cause and effect,
While will-power, faith and judgment elect
To overleap wisdom that earth has bought.

Voices pursue us—are they in vain?
Songs of the veery, the lark's refrain
Tenderly thrill us, and we, too, soar,—
For something lifts when the lark-note rings
To something beyond the outside of things
And God in His home seems just next door.

DOUBT

The shadow signs of doubt that dare
 To trace themselves around my heart,
Stand out a twisted mesh of care,
 Like barren stems, which have the art
To emphasize their heavy lines.
In contrast to the wall, such vines
 Look strong as ropes,
And on it, clinging, each dark stem entwines.

Black coils exaggerate their girth:
 They mar with many a grievous mark
When winter rigors cause a dearth
 Of fruitful life and leave them stark.
But all the wealth that waits so well
On spring's leaf-elves with later swell
 To guard new hopes
And screen the doubt beneath their sylvan spell!

COME WITH ME

Oh come with me, dear weeping heart,
And we will go away;
For I am tired of pains that dart
And you are saddened from the smart
Of things that hurt to-day.

Together we will share a dream
Of triumph, you and I,
Because within us things that seem
Composed of grief—and nerves that scream—
Are earnestly cast by!

Companions, up and up, we go,—
My weary heart and yours;
For cloud-top-high are dreams aglow,
And we shall catch the overflow
Through sunny apertures.

Yes, come with me, dear lonely one,
For we are kin, I know;
And hand in hand we shall outrun
The dolors that our hearts would shun!
Oh come with me and go!

A BORROWED BOOK

Some one has caught a glimpse of stagnant
hours,
Has seen the tiresome tinge of Day-by-Day,
Has felt that long Monotony lacks flowers
And needs a sprite to spirit Time away.

And so my friend has gathered a bouquet
Of treasured words that in her garden grew,
And lent to me a poet's brilliant spray
Of time-diverting verses, fresh as dew.

The sunshine of my friend I borrow, too,
And shadows are dispelled, the hours beguiled;
The weariness is gone, the light is new;
With friendly Time I now am reconciled!

A KING'S GARDEN

A formal garden is a fair plaisance,
Yet cold and stately in its way, and so
To me it is an artificial show—
The ostentation of the renaissance.

The endless view of straight, precise, tall trees
Which border on the sweeping esplanade,
Is like stiff lines of soldiers on parade
Saluting pompous power with each breeze.

The sculptured fountain, spurting all the time
And gulping back, insatiable with greed,
Wastes sparkling water, feeding but the weed
That thrives down underneath amidst the slime.

Patrician poplars, slim and graceful, sway
In surface pride, like social parasites,
With shallow roots—absorbing topmost lights
And reaching far and near for all they may.

The gay parterres enravish wondrously,
And revel in symmetrical, bright bloom,
But all the ornament is nature's doom
With its repelling regularity.

The winding walks and tall dividing hedge—
The nooks clandestine that fond youth invites,

Seem like a stage all set for love's delights
And force the senses with a hateful wedge.

Nobility is gone! There is a dearth
Of charming inconsistency's wild sway:
Such gardens garnish Nature for display,
And lack the ancient dignity of earth!

MY NEIGHBOR'S GARDEN

My next neighbor's garden is laid in a square
Of bright quilted patchwork, with pattern-form
there

As gay as the ones that my grandmother made
When patterns were borrowed in friendliest
trade.

The colors, design and the flowers fuse glints
To come back as one, one that suddenly prints
A unified picture of old-fashioned ways—
The stately, the slow, the colonial days.

My neighbor's near garden, so lovely a square,
Can turn every eye from delights elsewhere
To trace, around corners, down parallel lines,
The form that some fanciful title defines—
For like the quaint calico patchwork of old
The pattern's arrangement is made to unfold
With paths all about and with strips in between
Embroidered in stitches of mossy deep green.

This heart warming garden that lies just next
door

Is modeled to capture the fancy still more
Restudying pictures of petal and pose
That make up the pieces. The Larkspurs in rows
Are telling the praises of Fox-glove's new bonnet
Where bees are low droning a honey-sweet
sonnet:

The hickory bench on a small patch of grass
Is so luring a place that no lover could pass,
And figures and flowers of olden day hue
Are keyed to the tone of the Heavenly-Blue;
While right in the center of this brilliant block
Is skillfully set an old sundial-clock
Surrounded with roses—some pink and some
yellow—
All pointing or nodding to far North-Star fellow.

A charming wee entrance to this dear retreat
Is through a square-latticed and white garden
seat
Where under its archway one's fancy may see
The picture of jubilant butterfly glee,
Or humming-birds hover to dip in and sup
The sugar from deep in each flower made cup:
Far borders are skirted with delicate Phlox
And bowing, demurely-serene Hollyhocks.

Ah me, this quaint garden is truly the place
To feel something haunting averting my face
To long ago times when sweet modest ways
And making of patchwork fulfilled olden days.

Each month the fair pattern remains quite the
same
With different blocks in the rose-garland frame;

And different bevys of blossoming faces
Re-picture my mind with the stateliest graces—
These flowered designs which constrain me to
harbor

Odd whimses of old as I walk in my arbor!

What wonder that, near this enchanting gay
square,

I love to go looking and lingering there!

MY GARDEN IS MY THEATRE

A garden theatre I own
And when I long to see a play
I watch its pageant,—in a way
True acts are shown.

The scenery is always set :
The summer-house, the trellised arch,
The deep green shrubs and feather-larch
Dew sparkling wet.

The rustic bench is waiting there
Beneath the tree and just beyond,
The dial darkened signs respond
To sunshine fair.

The sky for background gives a glow
No human artist-brush could sketch
With clouds all silver-tipped to etch
The depth below.

And actors come and go for me :
They are the birds, the butterflies,
The fairies' wings,—if you are wise
You, too, can see.

The blossoms nod and turn their heads
At bumble-bee's insistent kiss,

As—rumbling, hungering, loving—this
Is how he weds.

The orchestra is perfect here :
It pipes and plays in lofty trees,
And every note is one to please,
So true, so clear.

It even trills such thrilling lays,
That satyrs come, and nymphs and fauns,
To dance and prance across the lawns
In mist arrays.

It is a play of sweet repose ;
No sordid problems to be solved,
No hate or tragedy involved,
Or lover woes.

The robins know I love their song ;
They flit and turn before they soar,
And even answer my encore
In cadence long.

Then brown leaves flutter, one by one,
To tell me that this nature play,
Which I have watched, day after day,
Is almost done.

And when night's dusky curtain drops
I feel at rest—not worn with strain
Attempting, foolishly, to gain
Life's trumpery sops.

MAY-TIME

May-time! Oh, this hour just breathe
The matchless fragrance of the air,
Wind-wafted here and everywhere
And let its incense round you wreath!

The sky is an enameled sphere
Revealing luminous bright tones
That shine upon the day; its zones
Of gloom dispelled by sunshine clear.

The tender opening leaf of green
Enchants us with elusive might:
It has unfolded over night
With vital promises unseen.

Behold the brilliant pageant—bud
And blossom waving toward the green
Banners of silk in royal sheen—
For so come joys of May aflood!

The hyacinths and daffodils
Proclaim with pride—the spirit hears,
Inaudible to other ears—
That Spring is walking on the hills.

The birds have come to herald, too,
Her presence in the homestead plot:

Look! Hear the joyous polyglot
From flashing red and gold and blue!

Dull spirits feel themselves transform
To ecstasy, like this brave choir,
Which warbles with enraptured fire
And sways fruit-petals into storm.

Horsechestnut trees along the street
Have decked themselves with waxen blooms,
Which gleam like candle lights in rooms
Before their wax is burned complete.

You never, never could express
The rapture, the enthralling power
Which comes to you in such an hour,
And buoys you up for life's duress.

It must have been sometime in May
That God looked on his work on earth,
And found it good! And now rebirth
Is also thrilling us, to-day!

AN INTERLUDE

Musicians sometimes change
A deep refrain
And turn the melody to strange
Sweet haunting notes that wake to life
And in our hearts remain.

So, in the harmony
Of life's delight
Strange moments leap to memory
And, touching deeper chords of life,
Link strains of subtle might.

Thus it was today
As forth I rode,
Contentedly, my role to play
And feel the throbbing pulse of life
Which, ghostly, by me strode.

Then suddenly, you passed
And looked at me—
And held my spirit fast!
Unlike a stranger's countenance
Which turns with casual glance
To look, and does not see,
Your soul met mine—
And, for a moment, wine
Coursed through my veins
Like rain in hurricanes.

Swayed by a master sign
The major purpose to refine
The music changed, and melody
I heard, in weird and minor key.
I felt a thrill of spirited surprise
And turned to question your insistent eyes.
What did you see—
Why did you look at me
With sphinx-like scrutiny?

Questions echoed through the whirr
Of traffic as we passed.
I wondered why the songs that were
Should change so unexpectedly
To let another make for me
Odd strains which held me fast
With instant comraderie!

It was a bar of harmony
In concord with the world.
Driving on, impelling me—
The wheels of life were whirled!

THE MESSENGER

Oh Bluebird, winging near me,
You veer away and then,
Returning, bear a message
To tell again, again!
Is Eros in the secret?
Has he dispatched you here
To flash your feathers gleaming bright,
And pipe your song of cheer?

You deepen heaven's color
Bird-sprite of Happiness:
You bring unto my senses
A message to redress
For days of chilling loneliness,
For days of sable hue,
When I would give all I possess
To hear, dear heart, from you.

How strangely I am trembling
At your transporting note,
For I was faint with longing
To hear that pulsing throat!
The reason you are Happiness
I know! Its truth I prove.
The reason? Well, why not confess—
You sing to me of love.

SO YOU ARE LIGHT TO ME

The herald of the coming day
Is rolling back the night,
And beauty of the dawning gray
Before the wealth of light
Is like the shadow-thoughts that stray
To greet me when you are away.

When splendor of the day is here
And empty night is gone,
The gracious radiance and cheer
Are love's own benison,—
The love that shines when you are near,
A sparkling signal to endear.

The rays that evening sunsets fling
Around the glowing rose
When lingering tender kisses cling
The flower heart to disclose,
Are like you, too, the love you bring
With day's repeated offering.

And does the morning light unroll
The miracle of day?
And does the daylight still control
The evening softened ray?
So you, my love, can make the whole
Of light for me—day's living soul.

“WILL-O’-THE WISP”

Alas, my fond desire is “Will’-o-the-Wisp”!

He holds me charmed with glimmer clear and
crisp,

Yet teases me with his elusive wile,

Which frees me, only backward to beguile.

A phantom “Will-o’-the-Wisp” is my desire!

I reach for its reflected light, but higher,

Now here, now there, it dances in my eyes,

Dazzling and blinding—then away it flies.

Oh deep desire, oh haunting “Will-o’-the-Wisp”,

With those sweet hopes and longings that you
lisp,

Torment me not with your evasive spell,

Release me, please, till I charm you as well!

A CAMP-FIRE LONG AGO

A certain camp-fire lives and burns
In a corner of my mind;
Its leaping flame remembering turns
Old fuel's heart to find.

The pine logs draw a shadow straight
With the silver pointed moon,
And dancing wraiths with bows ornate
Are humming secret rune.

Wood embers dead long years ago
No flames can vitalize;
But I can keep my fire aglow
By the light within your eyes.

WAITING

The summer's urgent lurement, gay,
With leaves all beckoning in gracious play,
Compels me to the joyance of each day—
But you are far away.

Cicades loudly call and sing,
The flowers shine, the birds are on the wing,
And, oh, the woodland is a living thing,
But you, they do not bring.

The water gently laves the dock
Where waiting boats beside the lake-shore rock:
I hear the leader's bell among the flock,
But not your knock.

Alas, I want you here again!
The road you chose wound over hill and plain,
And where you went, 'tis there my heart has lain.
I wait, but not in vain.

LOVE'S REQUEST

Tell me why the beauty of the roses,
Lovely in the tender night's disguise,
Never in the starshine quite uncloses
Secrets that my heart would keenly prize.

Subtly to my lips I feel a pleasure
Wafted like the sense of being kissed:
Roses' hearts and yours are haunting treasure—
Both seem often hidden in a mist.

Mist of evening veil and velvet petal,
Sweetness unresponsive to my sight,
Tell me why the rose and you unsettle
Calm of vision clear and night's delight?

Speak to me and make the mist uncover
Heart of rose and heart of one more dear:
Whisper to me through the dusk, my lover,
Speak and make love's meaning wholly clear!

LOVE'S ANSWER

You cannot tell with lips my heart's requesting,
You may not even softly lift your voice,
But oh, your eyes dear love-looks are attesting,
And keeping tryst to make my heart rejoice.

The silence of your soul you are obeying,
No tender thought of me you need to tell,
For oh, my lover, your deep eyes are saying
"I love you, dear, I love you, love you well."

THE ABSENT ONE

All day my thoughts are wandering with you.
All through the night they still go dreaming on.
Then they, content, at happy rendezvous,
Are like the halcyon.

You are the clear and calm life-buoyant pool,
And yieldingly I sink upon your breast :
Thus held, my thoughts are nestling, warmly,
cool,
And find their perfect rest !

YOUR SHADOW

From you no gloomy shadow falls
Within my room when you are here ;
But warmest golden light installs
Itself—if you are near.

The playful shadow only comes
When you are gone, with wayward knack ;
And that dull silver-chill benumbs
The light—till you come back.

Your shadow is so strange a thing ;
Detached from you it seems to grow.
You never tiny vestige bring—
Yet leave it when you go !

THE PHANTOM OF FEAR

Listen to the music's throb!
Strains of violin that sob
Unresponding to the magic of the night:
How they beat a hateful wonder
As they strike my joy asunder—
Unrelenting tones that, passing, leave affright.

I was thinking, dear, of you,
Passing fondly in review
Happy hours that linger, charming with delight,
But the music's sudden robbing
Of the quiet with its sobbing
Chilled my soul, till on my spirit fell a blight!

Oh, the horror of the thought
That the threnody so brought—
Endless moments lacking touch of you, or sight!
See the ghost dance in derision
As it makes a mental vision
And intones a ghastly measure, dead and white!

THE GARDEN OF LOVE

Sweet are the gifts of the garden, my lover ;

Garlands of perfume my senses entwine,
Blossoms bend low and their petals uncover
Odors more potent than merit of mine.

You are the gift of love's garden, my treasure ;

You are the spirit the flowers possess—
Semblance of nature's most ravishing measure,
Blending endearments with heaven's caress.

Sweet as the garden's own fragrancv clinging,

Fair as the beauty the tanglement sheds,
Dearer by far is the love you are bringing,
Dearer the time which your lingering weds.

You are the heart of the garden's wild rapture,

You are the magic of flowers agleam,
You are the hope that my soul flies to capture—
Garlanded wonder and fancy adream !

REACTION

The beautiful things of this glorious world
Are so fathomless in their delight,
That beauty surpassing the vision, has hurled
My soul into blackness of night.

The marvelous justice and wisdom of thought,
That is sometimes the gift of a man,
Is so godlike that wonder and reverence have
wrought
In my mind a far place hard to span.

And the love that you bear me, Oh lover of mine,
Is so high and so holy a boon
That my spirit relaxes, transition benign
Makes my heart sink in death, like a swoon.

TO A BROOK

All verse of "babbling brooks" should be taboo!
Forbidden in memorials of rhyme,—
But who could fail to sing the heart of you,
O mystic, whispering element of time?
You disregard both cycle and the clime,
Descendent of eternity's first rill;
You live and flow in mimic pantomime
Of motion and with music's charm you fill
Your upturned shining cup of mirrored daffodil.

Your origin you chant to silver grace
Of mountain vales where transitory things
Like dew or opalescent cloud first trace
Effect unchangeable, which downward flings
Creation's essence with a rush that swings
And tumbles by the flimsy haunts of men,
That hurries by the marsh where bog-moss
 clings,
Before you find the shining pool and then
Attain the final headlong plunge beyond the glen.

You bear the imprint of your maker's clear
Design in your ecstatic ordered flow.
At present like the days of yester-year
You come with syllables of joy, and go
Your way where even grievous symbols grow
Against malicious rocks—the rocks that dash

Hurt tears of spray! Here, flecks of sunshine
 glow,
There, tiny wisps of straw can cut a gash,
And shade relieves bewildering dancing lights
 that plash.

How merrily your rippling laughter fills
The glade and makes the quiet lowland proud
To own the argent flow your life distills!
As placid intellects look on a crowd
Of children clamoring in play so loud
That heart is freshened and receives a stir,
So earth along your margin is endowed
With greater beauty! Oh fleet reveller,
Laugh on in gurgling rapture-joys, our mes-
 senger!

The age-old minstrel wind pipes on and on
And improvises tender melody
That swells and flows in perfect unison
With flower bells and joins the harmony
Of tinkling liquid,—making jubilee,
So crystal clear, so full of music's might,
That precious loveliness can keep the key
Till each new morn recalls the face of light
Above the clinging velvet cloak of sapphire night.

Reflected garniture of lacy cloud
And leafage tapestry enchant the eyes
So deftly that a ravished spirit bowed
In worship ere swift magic brought surprise

Of dreams to soften day. Such mellow guise
Enhances lattice-work of trampled grass,
And violets whose sundrenched leaves baptize
The soul with mystery. Sweet, cool morass
Exhaling perfume nought in woodland can
surpass.

What wonder, thus attuned and thus adorned
That swiftly flitting birds give pause and bend
A downward course; that gauzy wings have
scorned

The blue, your fascination to attend
And mingle metal-colorings that blend
Where down turned mirrored grassy stems
portray

Your spirit—like the loved face of a friend
Reflecting joy or sympathy to stay
O'er wrought emotion with serene composing
ray.

Oh, lovely delicately rippling brook,
Why leap ahead and haste for that beyond
With splashing eagerness and longing look?
So, ardent youth impels the wizard-wand
Of time, believing that the the diamond
Of life is only held by Future's hour!
Do not forget your present emerald frond,
Your lily pearl, the ruby of your flower,
And darkest night made clear and fresh by opal
shower.

The evening luster of the turquoise sky,
With moonstone set and interlacing jade
Of filmy leaves are all to glorify!
Does memory of precious gems soon fade?
Ah, youth is a deserting renegade
From even youth's delightsomeness, and fast
Your lovely water-path leads unafraid
Beyond the shielding mother-banks and past
Protecting trees to reach the broader fields at
last.

Alas, it is beyond my power to tell
The mysteries you prattle openly.
Tho only joy and pleasure seem to dwell
In you, you teach beguiling witchery
Of childlike love and fresh philosophy.
Your future qualities will surely steal
This honeyed magic in its purity,
And in the glassy depths of pools reveal
The deeper things which lightsome laughter must
conceal.

There you will dream again of winsome youth—
Will clearly indicate what lay before,
And find the undercurrent of first truth
Re-rippling gently now along the shore:
With silent undersong you will restore

The phantom hopes of men a little while,
For you, with wisdom of a deeper lore,
Will be content to rest,—evading guile,
Inspiring with the courage of your shining smile.

TRANSITION

I do not long to be down South
Tho harsh the March wind blows:
I would not miss the rapid change
To warmth from sugar-snows!

And even now the yellow clumps
Of crocuses are bright
As brilliant oranges down there—
And Spring comes overnight!

THE WINDS OF THE DAWNING

The winds of the dawning are turning my feet
 far astray;
World-calls for my fingers and footsteps I cannot
 obey,
For something is luring and urging to dreamland
 to-day.

My garments are billowing free in the breezes
 that woo,
And I can but follow, arms eagerly reaching
 out, too,
To gather the dreams that outnumber the clouds
 in the blue.

The world has grown small and recedes in the
 brilliance of light
Now shining in happy possession of dreams that
 invite.
Who cares for material snares? It is dreams
 that requite!

THE FAIRIES' PICNIC

Far on the mountain the sun-fays are dancing,
High in the sky the cloud-pixie wings fly,
Sparkles, the foam-waves, like gems are enhancing,
Topaz-lights gleam from the hillside near by.

This is the day of the fairies' excursion!
Nature is decked in a festive array;
Animals frolic to whispered coercion—
Who does not know it is Fairyland Day?

Nymphs and wee gnomes, hand in hand, bend the
grasses,
Sprites play their pranks with an artful caress:
There, through the woodland, the queen's carriage passes
Led by old Pan piping on with finesse.

See them, come! Follow and join in the revel—
People are stupid who veil wonder-eyes!
Come though the breezes your calm may dishevel,
This is the day of the fairies' surprise.

OLD SONGS

RONDEAU

They come and go—the songs we heard
When childhood played upon the stage:
I turn back softly to that page
And still recall each little word.

Sweet and clear, like note of bird
Or far off echo from a sage
They come and go.

My heart with crowding thoughts is stirred
As melodies of old engage,—
Those lullabys that still assuage!
For when I need uplifting gird
They come and go.

RONDEL OF GRATITUDE

O God, how thankfully I read the line
Some unknown poet's flaming mind has made:
Emotion deftly interchanged is laid
Upon my restless heart and now is mine.

It shames me when to failure I incline,
It holds me high, and when I am afraid
O God, how thankfully I read the line
Some unknown poet's flaming mind has made.

I long to tell him how his words entwine
Themselves among my thoughts to give me aid
Yet he can never know and my crusade
Of gratitude is lost: but at my shrine
O God, how thankfully I read the line!

THE LIGHT

RONDEAU

It shall be mine! My faithful search shall find,
Beyond the night by which our eyes are blind,
A sure tho subtle glimmer of the day
Which follows, ending darkness. I shall say
“ ’Tis only night and gloom that are unkind!”

Black night has frightened me and made my mind
Lose reasoned poise as gropingly I wind
In frantic search of calming light! I pray
It shall be mine!

And so it comes! White day glides in behind
The baleful night, and now my soul shall bind
And banish shuddering terrors quite away.
Oh, I will gather in a roundelay
Life,giving light, and sing with wise mankind
“It shall be mine!”

A BALLADE OF DOERS

I wonder which is man's best bent?

To do or be! For each is free
To choose his heart's own instrument—
But while I, choosing, bend the knee
My song is but a threnody,
Or minor lay. I never knew
The tones to make a symphony,
But I can praise the ones who do.

The ones who pipe with great portent,
And fill the world with jubilee,
Have chosen life most excellent.
Ah, some can deftly touch the key,
But some of us can only *be*!
Like shining love, I, too, would strew
The world with songs of joy and glee—
But I can praise the ones who do.

All those who sing and work are sent
To follow thus the world's decree.
Each tiny task with great is blent,
And through man's toil the seers foresee
The earth a place of heaven's degree.
Man's faithfulness to make us new!
Not all will work for life's small fee,
But I can praise the ones who do.

Dear persons all, whose work I see,
World gratitude goes out to you,
Oh, some of us can only BE,
But I can praise the ones who DO!

“COUP DE GRACE”

I played upon life's seashore
And chased the breakers out,
But when the wave beat back at me
It was a whelming rout!

If I had known how fruitless
To fight against the tide,
I should have saved myself the rout—
But would have clung to pride.

FAR AS THE DREAM OF SPACE

We do not always think in words.
Ideas flit across the brain like birds
And like them rise above on wings
That do not even touch the names of things!
High, fundamental, vision free.—
These are the flights I need to make me see.

SUMMER RAIN

The tender threnody of steady rain
Blends music pathos with the heart's own pain;
And earthy fragranciness of growing things
Surrounds old hurts with new-born offerings.

A GOLDEN DAY

Arise! Now comes the scintillating day

Between the gray October gales that blow!
Come singing,—lift your hearts from grief and
know

That you must take the sunshine path of play
To find the glory-thoughts that wing their way
On kissing, clinging winds,—gay thoughts,
that go

A-dancing through the slanting beams below
And climb the trees to find the highest ray!

Awake, my heart, look up and meet the thought
Of God that fills the air with glory-strewn
Delight! The colored leaves, unasked, unbought,
Like flaming fires of unknown things, com-
mune

With autumn's rich conceit and thus is wrought
A golden day far lovelier than June.

TO A NOVEMBER ROSE

Brave little, bright little autumn rose,
Holding your head up in wintry snows!
Battered leaves sodden and cheerless and gray—
You are still crimson, royally gay.

Shadows depressing and all gone awry!
Where is the sunshine, where is the sky?
Everything dull and so crisp and so cold,
But there you are shining in velvet and gold.

Sadly I study the garden's grim mood,
Perfectly matching my own solitude,
And I shrink from myself and the garden, too,
But red little rose, I am drawn to you.

WISHES

I like to feel the snow-flakes gently fall upon
my face.

Like butterflies they flutter, whirl and turn and
interlace,

Till finally some blow my way and light with
winning grace.

I like to think that they are whimsey wishes of
my friends

With glowing light and goodly cheer; that this
wee flake portends

Ideal joy, and that one during ills can make
amends.

As clear as crystal comes each floating wish with
pure intent,

Sun-bright while drifting high in air—a dancing
blandishment,

And warm good-will can make insensate wraith
seem true event.

Exalting wishes everywhere, these shining flakes
now stilled!

They wrap the dreary landscape in a lustral
snow-white gild

To indicate the splendor—if their wish could be
fulfilled!

THE SPIRIT OF THE PRAIRIE

O the sweep of the wide open prairie,
That invites like the heart of a friend,
With the roll and incline of the coulee
And the freedom of limitless end!

O the lift of immensities' distance,
The curve of the wide circling skies,
Pure ozone that blows from the foothills
With a clear and refreshing surprise!

How the feet of my horse create music,
Like a swinging and rythmical song,
While the beat of my heart's supreme fervor
Learns love as we lope, lope along!

For the life of my soul was in bondage;
It had never known where to expand—
But lo, on the prairie unbounded
It can splendidly grow to command!

A CITY—PASSING GLIMPSE

The tops of buildings and a tall church spire
Against the misty hills which make a frame
Encircled round a town! Who knows the
name,

Or cares to know? Illusion's gift seems higher
Than history and lifts the vision nigher

Renown than other sites of greater fame.

The halls reflect the sun in flash of flame
And with their beauty set my heart afire.

It is a city folded to the heart

Of noble constant hills. To man a home,
Built steadfastly with love as guiding chart,

And when I see the central looming dome
It holds a thought uplifted and apart—

Lo, for the hour, as great as ancient Rome.

TO A NIGHTHAWK ON THE WING

Oh, nightly flying bird in heaven's high arching
blue,

I watch you circle far and strangely soar,
Or stop in sudden turning—crying hoarse halloo,
To downward drop and then your flight
restore.

I wait for evening's twilight glow to hear the
whirr

That stirs an after silence in your wake,
And with you I would be, a winged adventurer,
Your perfect poise and madness to partake.

Wide wings can beat against the shadowed azure
sky

So swiftly that my eyes can scarce pursue;
But thought, more swift than fleetest wings, can
onward fly

And with your dusky path keep rendezvous.

Although your winging joy to mortals is not
given,

The rapture of the spirit's peerless flight
Is symbol of the day when, swift, the soul is
riven

From earth-bound time to know your free
delight.

SOUND FROM SILENT NIGHT

When depth of night comes drifting down
through space

And darkness touches everything,
Deep quiet creeps along earth's phantom face
With tentacles of sleep that cling.

But when the night charm broods in that dim
hour,

Awake, O mystic groping soul,—
'Tis then that God seems nearest in His power,
And magic sounds through silence roll!

What is that soft vibration in the air?

Some wind-wave, wireless telegraph,
Some far off fog-horn booming its rude blare,
Or gnomes who in the darkness laugh?

Is it a meteor fallen in its sleep

With distant cataclysmic crash?
Or waves of ether in the open deep,
Or clinking trails when comets clash?

Perhaps Aurora, in a chariot drawn,

Is rumbling high in astral space!
Perhaps it is the matin song of dawn,
Or moonmen from their lunar place!

Nay, none of these: I hear the sound anew—
The echo of the Holy One
Who passes through the heavens to review
Each God-made brilliant starry sun!

It was not some delusive sound I heard
For wavelets tell it to the shore,
The leaves repeat it to the trees, the bird
Trills in the darkness to adore.

A trembling joy awakens to respond
And out of hearts true worship flows.
Oh, faint conception of that One beyond
Whose endless might and power—who knows?



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